TRAVANCORE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 20th July, 1922.

The Council met in the Victoria Jubilee Town Hall at Eleven Thirty of the Clock. The President was in the Chair.

PRESIDENT: Gentlemen, with your permission, I would like to make a few preliminary observations on the subject of interpellations.

I have been obliged, much against my will, to disallow certain interpellations and I had to do so for the reason that they appeared to contravene the provisions of the Legislative Council Rules, or the practice obtaining in other legislative bodies. Rule 7 specifies the subjects in regard to which questions are not admissible. Rule 8 gives the directions to be observed as to the form and contents of questions and Rule 11 mentions two instances when, even if the questions are admissible under the above rules, they may yet be disallowed by the President.

Some of the questions received related to matters which have been removed by Section 11 of the Regulation from the cognisance of the Council and these are inadmissible. Again, questions which related to different subjects were grouped together as one question. This also is not permissible. Under the present law, there is no limit to the number of questions which could be asked by a member and it will be a source of great convenience if members would, in future, kindly send up questions so framed that each of them relates to a single matter. Considerable difficulty is found in framing suitable answers when the questions violate this rule. Though, strictly, such questions could have been disallowed, the office was instructed, for the present occasion, to break up the questions wherever possible and admit them; but this could never be satisfactorily done in the Legislative Council office. Another point to be remembered in the framing of questions is that they should be solely requests for information. The right possessed by members to interpellate Government is only intended to enable them to obtain information from Government and not to supply the same to Government. Questions such as "Do the Government know that, with the progress of commerce and industry steam tugs and barges are beginning to be largely employed for traffic?" cannot be regarded as requests for information and I have been put to the painful necessity of disallowing such questions. Further, some questions were worded argumentatively and some contained inferences. These questions had also to be ruled out. In some cases, an expression of the opinion of Government was asked for. As an illustration may be mentioned the following: "Do the Government consider that for carrying cargo a trader would prefer the Alleppey-Shertallai canal to the Vembanad lake?" Such questions also under the rules are not admissible. The attention of the Government was invited by certain interpellations to articles published in newspapers and the questioners then proceeded to ask

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[Mr. S. Parameswara Aiyar.]

whether the Government would make an enquiry in respect of the allegations contained in such articles. These questions have been held inadmissible as contrary to practice and it will be obvious that it would be neither desirable nor feasible for Government to go into each and every allegation made in a newspaper. When, however, a member personally makes himself responsible for the accuracy of such statements, then the Government will make the necessary enquiries. Several members have by means of interpellations asked Government to make a statement of the policy underlying certain administrative measures and I may say that it is not the practice to *interpellate* Government with a view to elicit an expression of policy as, within the limits of an answer, it will be impossible for Government to explain the policy pursued or proposed to be pursued and the reasons which underlie such policy. I would also mention that it is not the practice to ask for information which has already been published and which is available to the public if they would only take the trouble to seek it.

I am mentioning all these things in the hope that the interpellations sent up by the members on future occasions may be so framed as to save the President the necessity of disallowing any of them. I am free to confess that, this being the first occasion, when questions in such large measure had to be dealt with and so expeditiously amidst the pressure of heavy work, it may have happened that questions which could have been allowed might by oversight have been disallowed and *vice versa*, and in this matter I would ask the indulgence of the Council.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

[*Order made by the President under Standing Order No. 12.*

(1) Printed copies of the questions and answers to be put and given at a meeting of the Council shall be placed on the Council table 15 minutes before the President takes his seat.

(2) The questions shall be put and answered in the following manner:—

The Secretary shall call the name of each interpellator in serial order, specify the serial number of his questions and make a sufficient pause to allow him a reasonable opportunity of rising in his place, if he is desirous of asking a supplementary question. Supplementary questions must be put immediately after the principal questions to which they relate.]

PREPARATION OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTORAL ROLLS.

1. MR. JOSEPH PANJIKARAN: (*a*) Will the Government be pleased to state whether the Government do not know that the present Legislative Council Electoral Rolls have not been correctly prepared in several taluks and that the same has been the cause of grave discontent among the people?

(*b*) Will the Government be pleased to state whether the Government have taken any and what steps to punish the officers responsible for these incorrect electoral rolls?

MR. S. PARAMESVARA AIYAR: (*a*) Government have received information that the electoral rolls in some cases are incorrect. It was

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